

Report of Director

3G Sports Pitch funding and update**1 Purpose of report**

To provide an update on the progress of the 3G pitch proposed for Redwell Leisure Centre and seek confirmation that the in-principle decision to contribute £300k capital funding towards the project can now be fully committed as part of the agreed capital programme . This will allow officers to submit the bid to the Football Foundation. Note: this report will be withdrawn if the planning application detailed below is not approved on 6 June (the Planning Committee will be held after these papers have been published).

2 Executive summary

- 2.1 A report to resources committee in September 2016 recommended that approval be given, in principle, for £300,000 of capital funding for the installation of a new 3G football pitch and floodlights at Redwell Leisure Centre. Since this time work has been done to allow a planning application (Ref: WP/17/00378/FUL) to be submitted. This application is due to be reported to planning committee on 6 June, recommended for approval.
- 2.2 This work has allowed a draft pre-tender estimate to be produced which identifies a revised cost of around £662,000. The Football Foundation has confirmed that it will fund the project up to the full tender price over and above the council's £300k capital contribution and project development costs.

3 Appendices

Appendix 1– Timetable

4 Proposed action:

- 4.1 **The committee is invited to RECOMMEND to approve that the £300,000 agreed in principle for the 3G pitch at the Redwell Leisure Centre be confirmed and added to the capital programme.**
- 4.2 **To commission a report to services committee on the facilities to be provided at Redwell Leisure Centre following the decision on the 3G pitch.**

5 Background

- 5.1 A report to services committee on 21 March 2016 recommended the submission of a capital bid for a 3G pitch to be sited at Redwell Leisure Centre, following the identification of the requirement for more high quality sporting provision in the open space, sports and recreation audit and assessment (2015). A 3G sports pitch would meet some of this identified need and be a facility that could maximise usage of the space due to the ability to play in all weathers and seasons due to the associated floodlighting.
- 5.2 The project would be made possible through the Football Foundation's grant programme, funding over 50% of the cost. The Football Foundation identified the Redwell Leisure Centre as the most suitable and cost effective site due to the facilities available, established membership, and communications. The proposal was to replace an existing football pitch with a 3G pitch, further enhancing the current facilities at the site.
- 5.3 A first stage business case was submitted to the Football Foundation in November 2016. The council had been invited to further develop their application with support from the Football Foundation, who has identified the Redwell Leisure Centre site at Wellingborough as a strategic priority.
- 5.4 An application for planning permission to construct an external sports pitch comprising an artificial grass pitch surface, ball stop fencing, a pitch perimeter barrier, store, viewing space, access and floodlighting at Redwell Leisure Centre was submitted in June 2017.
- 5.5 The need to prioritise the addition of a third generation turf pitch within the borough has been acknowledged over a number of years and this demand was again highlighted in the recent playing pitch assessment conducted by Knight Kavanagh Page (KKP).
- 5.6 At present there are no facilities of this type and the report illustrates significant shortfall of supply to meet current demand. The present failure to enable access to high quality football training provision is of concern to the volunteer network of grassroots clubs and the site will also alleviate some of the pressure relating to match play demand.
- 5.7 National figures evidence 1 in 7 fixtures are affected during winter months and only 1 in 3 grass pitches considered adequate to play on. Locally, 56% of pitches were rated as standard and 44% rated as of poor quality. The additional benefit of this type of facility to serve social use is also high on the agenda - and part of Northamptonshire County Football Association's strategic ranking is based on a rich and diverse record of delivering successful development initiatives incorporating flexible formats of the game.
- 5.8 As part of the Football Foundation business plan officers carried out a consultation process which established that at least 7 clubs comprising 86 teams and equating to more than 1,200 players would use the facility.

- 5.9 In comparison, last summer 8 cricket fixtures in total were hosted at the Redwell site. This was at a cost to the council in spite of additional volunteer hours put in by Wellingborough Town Cricket Club, which is not sustainable.
- 5.10 Throughout the planning process discussions have been ongoing with Sport England, the English Cricket Board, Northamptonshire Cricket, Wellingborough Town Cricket Club, and the council, to identify an alternative location for the club's third team.
- 5.11 A short term solution has now been found, with funding from the Sport Development unit supporting the relocation of the club's third team to a good quality ground at Upper Dean Cricket Ground, Huntingdonshire, close to the East Northamptonshire border. This has been discussed with the club, who are in agreement to the proposal. As a collective it remains our aspiration to secure the club a base closer to home.
- 5.12 The planning application is being reported to planning committee on 6 June 2018 this considers all of the comments received and recommends that the application is approved subject to conditions.

Discussion

- 5.13 If the planning application is approved on 6 June then the draft pre-tender estimate will be updated. This is anticipated to be higher than the £600,000 initial estimate as costs have increased, due to the rise in materials' prices and the need to meet the planning conditions identified.
- 6.2 Following this, the next stage of the project will be to carry out a tender exercise; Appendix 1 includes a timetable of the process. The Football Foundation requires the pitch to meet its technical specifications and a fully costed tender prior to the panel meeting scheduled for October 2018 to determine grant applications. In order to progress to this stage the council's contribution will need to be confirmed.
- 6.3 The council has been using Robinson Low Francis, independent cost and property consultants, who are on the Football Foundation's framework to develop this scheme. Costs are therefore monitored and controlled, and some flexibility into the grant funding is built into the process.
- 6.4 On a broader related issue the dual benefit of freeing up space within the sports hall alongside the income generated from the third generation turf project will help secure Redwell Leisure Centre as a viable venue to continue providing positive sport and physical activity outcomes in the future. Once the planning application has been considered and the Playing Pitch Strategy completed, officers will work with Places for People to consider the future of the leisure centre and clarify which sporting facilities could be on offer. A report will then be submitted to the services committee, with recommendations.
- 6.5 The sporting demand identified, has been demonstrated via information provided to the Football Foundation and the planning policy process has clearly identified

a demand in Wellingborough over and above what is needed to support the income needs of the project for it to be self-sustaining. Costings have therefore confirmed that the projected use would not place any revenue demand on the council's finances.

- 6.6 Further consideration will be needed to agree the management arrangements of the proposed 3G pitch at Redwell, but this will not be discussed until the planning application has been determined.

7 Legal powers

- 7.1 Under section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 the council has express power to provide a very wide range of sports and recreational facilities and these are not subject to any limitations that would prevent implementation of the project referred to in this report.

- 7.2 The council's leisure services provider will need to be consulted and any conditions of grant funding from the Football Foundation relating to the land will be considered once known.

8 Financial and value for money implications

- 8.1 The installation of a 3G pitch will meet a significant amount of the sporting demand identified in Wellingborough, and there is an opportunity for match funding from the Football Foundation of greater than 50% of the cost, without which the project could not go ahead.

- 8.2 The Football Foundation has indicated that funds are available for the current application, but should the council decide not to pursue the existing proposal they will be allocated elsewhere.

- 8.3 The projected income generated from use will pay for the upkeep of the pitch and future maintenance. It will also add to the viability of the centre for the future by enhancing the provision of services.

9 Risk analysis

- 9.1 There is a high risk of not meeting the council's sports provision standards if it fails to provide suitable high specification sports facilities. This could limit the opportunities for local people and put Wellingborough at a disadvantage against neighbouring towns where such provision makes them a more attractive place to live, work and invest. This risk can be reduced by providing high quality sports facilities within the town, which offer access to all.

- 9.2 There is a low risk that the council will fail to secure Football Foundation funding, the consequences of which would mean the project would be undeliverable. However, the Football Foundation has already identified Wellingborough as a high priority for funding and is willing to fund some uplift in the costs identified in the tender process at the next stage. If the application from the council is not progressed there is a significant risk to the funding of

any 3G pitch within the borough after the investment of time and support from the Football Foundation in relation to this project.

- 9.3 There is a low medium risk that the improvements will fail to generate income targets. This will impact health and well-being targets and jeopardise future investment. Along with Football Foundation funding, the project will also be provided with support, guidance and external promotions from the Northamptonshire county FA. The Redwell Leisure Centre is already supported by an established membership, and should be further supported by a robust communications strategy for the 10 year period following the improvements.

10 **Implications for resources**

Any additional revenue costs created by the improvements and new pitch will be covered by the income generated. Once the planning application has been determined, and funding approved (if still required) officers will explore further options for the development and improvement of the leisure centre.

11 **Implications for stronger and safer communities**

A new pitch will generate renewed interest in using the facilities, local sport, and will promote healthy lifestyles and tackle obesity issues. The improved quality of the services will also provide a better training environment for aspiring local athletes and clubs, improving opportunities to compete at a higher level.

12 **Implications for equalities**

An initial equalities impact assessment has been completed with no negative impact. The scheme will need to meet Sport England's accessibility standard, ensuring the facility is open to as many people as possible.

13 **Author and contact officer**

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14 **Consultees**

Bridget Lawrence, Director
Julie Thomas, Director
Liz Elliott, Managing Director
Samantha Knowles, Assistant Director
Adrian Piper, Assistant Director
Quintin Allen, Northamptonshire Sports Officer
Julie O'Connell, Accountant

15 **Background papers**

The open space, sports and recreation audit and assessment (2015)

3G pitch, Redwell Leisure, Project Timetable

Item	Date
Application reported to Planning Committee.	6 June
The following actions are subject to approval of planning permission at Planning Committee on 6 June 2018	
Pre-tender estimate provided, and signed off by the council (needed before grant application).	8 - 14 June
Final business case and sports development plan submitted to Football Association (FA) (full application).	End June
Tender period.	June – July 2018
Tender report issued (needed prior to Football Foundation (FF) paper deadline).	Mid-July 2018
Football Foundation (FF) paper deadline.	20 September 2018
Football Foundation (FF) panel.	24 October 2018
Artificial grass pitch (AGP) supplier notified of project.	November 2018
Pre start on site - BCW accept offer, discharge any planning and pre-start conditions and agree title plan wording.	October 18- March 19
Start on site.	March/April 2019
Completion.	July 2019

Updated 1 May 2018

